

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY DRAWINGS FROM THE COLLECTION OF
MRS. GERTRUDE LAUGHLIN CHANLER AT NATIONAL GALLERY

WASHINGTON, D.C. May 26, 1982. François Boucher, Jean-Honoré Fragonard, Jean-Antoine Watteau and Gabriel de Saint-Aubin are among the leading eighteenth-century French artists whose drawings go on view in the National Gallery's East Building from June 20 through September 6, 1982. The exhibition includes 25 drawings from the collection of former ambassador to Spain, Irwin Boyle Laughlin. The collection is now owned by his daughter Gertrude Laughlin Chanler.

While the exhibition consists mainly of French works including figure studies, compositional drawings, and sketches for book illustrations, one Italian artist represented, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, reflects Mr. Laughlin's interest in architecture. Fantastic Monument in a Palatial Interior exemplifies Piranesi's highly inventive and imaginative style. Among the book illustrations on view are six Fragonard drawings which depict episodes from Miguel de Cervantes' novel, The History of Don Quixote de la Mancha, capturing the humor and pathos of the story with powerful black chalk contours combined with broad brown and gray washes. Fragonard devotes two compositions to the most famous episode of the story, Don Quixote Attacking the Windmill: the fantasy of Quixote as a valorous knight and the somber reality of his defeat.

While most of the drawings are from the second half of the eighteenth century, there is one compositional drawing by Watteau, Italian Comedians

(more)

Taking Their Bows, the earliest work on view. The dates of Watteau's drawings are problematic; however, this one is probably 1717-1719 as it is preparatory for the National Gallery's Italian Comedians painted in 1720.

Among examples by Boucher are two preparatory drawings for a painting of the nativity scene commissioned by Madame de Pompadour for the chapel of her ch[^]ateau, Bellevue. Boucher executed few religious drawings and turned to the great masters of the Italian baroque for inspiration. In addition, more typical of Boucher, are the three studies of female nudes. One of the drawings, Aurora, is thought to depict the artist's wife. They represent Boucher as an accomplished draftsman and, like Watteau, one who handled chalk with skill and grace.

Mr. Laughlin's Washington home, Meridian House, built to his specifications by architect John Russell Pope, is considered one of the finest examples of architecture in the French style in America. Pope also designed the National Gallery of Art for its founder, Andrew W. Mellon, and Laughlin was frequently consulted on special problems of design during the Gallery's construction.

Margaret Morgan Grasselli of the Gallery's graphic arts department organized the exhibition and wrote the accompanying catalogue which is fully illustrated.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION or photographs contact Katherine Warwick Assistant to the Director (Information Officer), or Carolyn Engel, Information Office, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 20565, area code (202) 842-6353.